



# Bush in sorry state

## Elder calls for urgent inquiry

by STEVE GRANT

PERTH'S bushland is in a sorry state and Aborigines might hold the key to its salvation, says Noongar elder Noel Nannup.

The experienced bushman says he's worried by the rapid decline of the city's remaining bushland, and believes an inquiry is needed to establish how critical the damage has become and what it will take to turn it around.

"There's just too much tar and too much cement," Mr Nannup told the *Herald* while en route to "country" with a tour group about to strengthen its connection to the land.

"Our wetlands are not being allowed to recharge, as rain is going into the drain rather than the soil." He also raises littering and the constant chipping away of remaining bush reserves by a slew of bureaucracies as major problems which need urgent addressing.

### Nature deprivation

He says the non-indigenous community, particularly the state's planners, needs to start recognising the value of the information Aborigines have stored about the environment, as well as their spiritual connection.

"We are environmentalists of the highest order," he says, noting their knowledge about the names and uses for plant species is miles ahead of the broader community.

Mr Nannup laments how little time youngsters get to spend in the bush nowadays, saying it deprives them of

a connection to their country and fuels ignorance about the problems it faces.

"When we were growing up as kids, mum was at home looking after us. But what time are parents allocating to their kids now?" he poses.

"They just don't have the time."

Mr Nannup says spreading the message about Aborigines' connection to the land and sharing the knowledge they hold has also recently been made harder by cuts to the state's education budget.

"I belong to a language group and we met up and put out 73 books about Aboriginal life and spirit and they were being used in classrooms by the Lote teachers, but they have all been knocked off," he says.

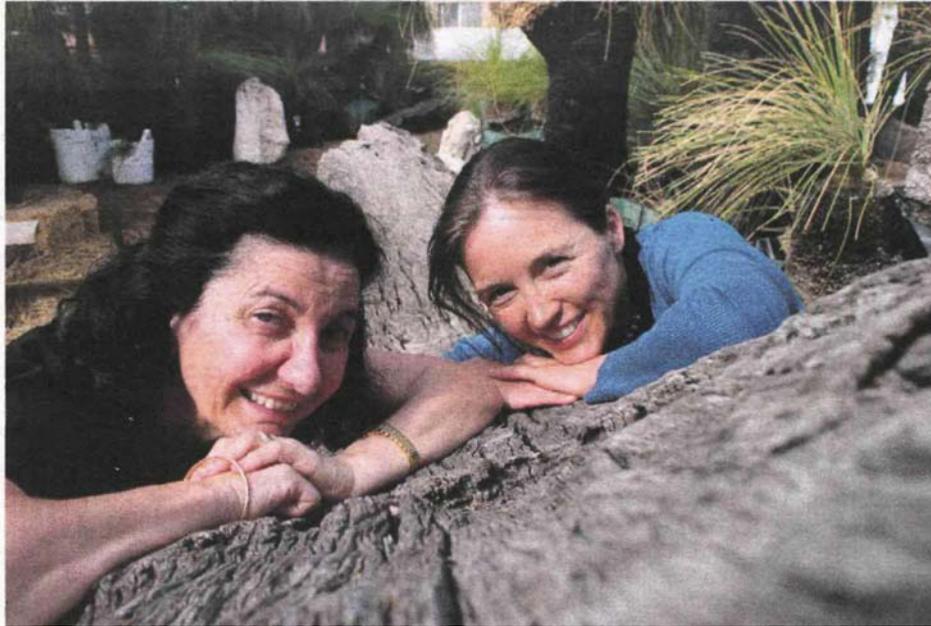
He's one of three speakers talking at the forum Valuing our Urban Green Space which has been organised by the Fremantle Residents and Ratepayers Association for today, Saturday April 12 from 1-4pm at Replants on Wray Ave.

FRRRA member and Greens staffer Eloise Dortch is organising the forum with Elena Monaco and says her concerns about green space involve mainly parks, where she takes her young daughter.

Ms Dortch was a strident critic of Fremantle council's decision to concrete over part of the Esplanade reserve for a skate plaza.

Also on the speakers list is Dr Lisa Wood, who's the deputy director of UWA's Centre for the Built Environment and Health, who'll be talking about the effects of green space on people's health, especially children. She told the *Herald* she was also concerned about how little children were getting outside.

Dr Paul Hardisty is the final speaker. As director of the CSIRO's Climate Adaptation National Research Flagship he'll be talking about the value of urban ecosystems in a changing climate.



• Elena Monaco and Eloise Dortch send some love towards nature. *Photo by Steve Grant*